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February 12, 2007

WEST VIRGINIA BULLETIN NO: WV300-7-6

SUBJECT: LTP -2007 EQIP Ranking Tool.

Purpose: To provide Clarification of Issues regarding the 2007 EQIP Ranking Tool.

Expiration Date: This Bulletin expires September 30, 2007

Several offices have contacted the Programs staff with concerns and questions on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) online ranking tool that all offices are required to use this year for ranking and selecting EQIP applications for funding. This document will attempt to address those concerns and answer your questions.

### **National Priorities:**

1. Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in considerable reductions of non-point source pollution, such as nutrients, sediment, pesticides, excess salinity in impaired watersheds consistent with TMDL's where available as well as the reduction of groundwater contamination or point source such as contamination from confined animal feeding operations?

### **Explanation:**

The meaning of "considerable" when addressing national priorities means that a practice has a positive CPPE value for the resource concerns being addressed by the national priority.

This question applies not only to watersheds on the state 303d list but to other watersheds where TMDLs have not yet been established by the state. The question reads better if you insert comas before and after the phrase "where available".

Note this is a two part question, the first part deals with non-point source concerns while the second deals with point source contamination from a confined animal feeding operation. A confined livestock feeding operation is defined as; a livestock facility that stables, confines, feeds, or maintains animals for a total of 45 days or more in any 12-month period and does not sustain crops, vegetation, forage growth, or post-harvest residues within the confined area in the normal growing season over any portion of the confinement facility.



2. Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in the conservation of a considerable amount of ground or surface water resources?

**Explanation:**

A “considerable amount” of resources means that you will adequately treat over 25% of the resource problems present on the planning unit, i.e. field.

3. Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in a considerable reduction of emissions, such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), volatile organic compounds, and ozone precursors and depleters that contribute to air quality impairment violations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards?

**Explanation:**

Since air quality improvement cannot be measured in the identified air resource concerns for WV, a “considerable reduction of emissions” will be achieved when the planned practices total at least a +1 for the resource concern according to the conservation practice physical effects chart in the WV FOTG.

4. Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in a considerable reduction in soil erosion and sedimentation from unacceptable levels on agricultural land?

**Explanation:**

For this ranking process, a “considerable reduction” in soil erosion and sedimentation is defined as a reduction in soil erosion or sedimentation of at least 25% of the difference between the current erosion level and the average weighted “T” value for the field. All fields included in the application area will meet this criterion before a yes answer can be given.

5. Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in a considerable increase in the promotion of at-risk species habitat conservation?

**Explanation:**

An at-risk species is defined as; any plant or animal species as determined by the State Technical Committee to need direct intervention to halt its population decline. Consult the following website for a list of included plants and animals.

<http://www.wvdnr.gov/Wildlife/RareSpecList.shtm>

## State Issues

1. Will implementation of the items in the EQIP contract bring the management of the associated land unit to the RMS level?

### **Explanation:**

The intent of this question is to give priority to those applicants who will achieve a RMS level of treatment with the conservation practices included in the contract. The RMS is considered on a field by field basis but all fields in the application must achieve this level of management to answer this question yes.

2. Is the land unit specified in this application covered under an existing conservation plan which includes the practices to be included in the EQIP contract?

### **Explanation:**

The intent of this question is to give priority to those applicants and offices that have followed the 9 step conservation planning process. There is no time limit as to when the plan should have been completed prior to ranking of the application. For example, the plan could have been completed and delivered to the applicant on the day prior to completing the application ranking process and the question would be marked yes.

3. Will the implementation of the EQIP contract address resource concerns associated with livestock which are overwintered on the land unit?

### **Explanation:**

This question gives priority to those applicants who address resource concerns associated with feeding and housing livestock over the winter.

4. Has the applicant completed, without cancellation or termination except for NRCS reasons, all Farm Bill program contracts held prior to this application? Answer yes if this is the first contract for this applicant.

### **Explanation:**

This question reduces the priority for those applicants with whom NRCS has either cancelled or terminated a Farm Bill Program contract. You will not penalize an applicant who cancelled a prior contract due to a change in practice standards.

5. Is the applicant completing contract items as scheduled in all existing contracts held by the applicant? Answer yes if this is the first contract for this applicant.

**Explanation:**

If a contract item has been rescheduled for the applicant in any existing or prior contracts, then this question is answered no. If the applicant has not demonstrated that he or she is willing or capable of complying with the provisions of prior contracts, then this applicant will not have as high of a priority.

The following statement will serve as your guidance when in doubt of whether an application will address a national priority or not - 'The degree to which a state addresses national priorities in its ranking systems will be used as one of the factors in determining state performance awards. This assessment will include the percent of the acres obligated in contracts that address national priority resource concerns compared to the total acres that address all resource concerns.'

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Herbert Andrick, ASTC-Programs at 304-284-7560.

/s/

KEVIN WICKEY  
State Conservationist

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